

U.S. Patent Application No.: 10/789,035
Amendment dated December 29, 2004
Reply to Office Action of October 7, 2004

PATENT

Attorney Docket No.: 713-57-PA

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This paper is submitted in response to the office action mailed October 7, 2004.

Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-12 were examined. Claims 1, 2, 5-7, and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) as anticipated by US 3,408,821- Redshaw. Claims 1-3 and 10-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) as anticipated by US 4,451,174 – Wetmore. Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103 as unpatentable over Wetmore in view of US 4,697,956 – Plaisance. Claims 8 and 9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103 as unpatentable over Redshaw in view of US 6,718,901 – Abbott et al.

In response to the office action, claims 1, 3, 4, and 10 have been canceled. New independent claim 13 has been added to replace the canceled independent claim 1. New claim 14 has been added, which depends from new claim 13. Claims 2, 5-9, 11, and 12 have been amended to depend from new claim 13. As explained below, it is respectfully submitted that new independent claim 13 is allowable over the art of record, as are dependent claims 2, 5-9, 11, 12, and 14.

New claim 13 now defines the buoyant column as having a lower end that is attached to the pontoon, whereby the column is vertically movable through the central opening of the deck between raised and lowered positions as the pontoon is raised and lowered. The invention is further defined as comprising: a plurality of radial arms fixed to the upper end of the column; a plurality of receptacles on the deck that receive the outer ends of the radial arms in a vertical, slide-in arrangement when the column is in its lowered position; and a locking element that is engageable with each of the arms and its corresponding receptacle when the arms are received in the receptacles so as to lock the upper end of the column to the deck. It is respectfully submitted that this combination of elements and limitations is neither shown nor suggested by the art of record, taken singly or in any combination that might reasonably suggest itself to those skilled in the pertinent arts.

Specifically, for example, neither of the primary references (Redshaw or Wetmore) teaches or suggests a mechanism for locking the upper end of the column to the deck, comprising

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a plurality of radial arms on the upper end of the column, each of which has an outer end that vertically slides into and is locked into engagement with a corresponding receptacle on the deck. Plaisance was cited for its disclosure of an attachment device for an offshore structure, comprising a radial arm that fits into a receptacle, and that is locked therein by a pin that fits through aligned apertures in the arm and the receptacle. The arm of the Plaisance device, however, is not fixed to the upper end of a buoyant column, and there is no teaching of so locating them in the art of record. Moreover, the connection between the arm and receptacle of the Plaisance device does not lock the bumper apparatus to the offshore structure; rather, the joint provided between the arm and the receptacle is described as providing a "pivotal" attachment. See, e.g., column 2, lines 30-49; column 3, lines 31-36; column 4, lines 12-15; and the Abstract. There is thus nothing in the references themselves that teaches or suggests the use of column-mounted radial arms and deck-mounted receptacles to lock the upper end of a buoyant column to a buoyant deck when the column is lowered with respect to the deck by means of adjusting the buoyancy of a pontoon to which the lower end of the column is attached. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 13 defines patentably over the art of record.

Claim 14 depends from claim 13 and more specifically defines the novel locking mechanism recited in claim 13. Claim 14 should therefore also be considered patentable over the art of record.

Claims 2, 5-9, 11, and 12 have been amended to depend from new claim 13. These claims further define the novel aspects of the invention, and should be allowed along with claim 13.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 2, 5-9, and 11-14 are patentable over the art of record and should be allowed.

Applicant notes the objection to the specification, on the grounds that certain publications are listed therein that were not cited in an information disclosure statement (IDS). These publications are cited merely to provide examples of conventional SPAR and semi-submersible platforms for background purposes only, and they were not considered to be relevant to the

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concept of an extendable draft platform (EDP), which is the type of platform to which the present invention pertains.

In summary, it is respectfully submitted that new independent claim 13 is patentable over the art of record, as are dependent claims 2, 5-9, 11, 12 and 14. Passage of the application to issue is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: December 29, 2004
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Attorney Docket No. 713-57-PA